

Allen - Scott Report

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CIA Chief Opposes News Of Cuba Agents Caught

By **ROBERT S. ALLEN** and **PAUL SCOTT**

Two of President Kennedy's closest assistants were the secret sources who disclosed that three CIA agents were among the 21 Americans freed from Cuban prison.

These "informers," as intelligence officers now irately refer to the two White House aides, are Theodore Sorensen, special counsel and principal speech writer of the President, and press secretary Pierre Salinger.

THEY DID THIS backstage divulging of "sensitive" intelligence information with the full knowledge of the President—and over the strong objections of Central Intelligence Director John McCone and his top officials.

Administration insiders attribute the disclosure of this "CIA story" to a high-level political decision in which the President and key advisers took part. In these deliberations, Sorensen took the lead in urging publicizing of the CIA agents' swap. He argued that release of these details was a political necessity to counter a certain storm of criticism of the President for agreeing to Castro's demands that a convicted murderer and four indicted saboteurs be freed in the prisoner exchange.

SORENSEN CONTENDED the administration could avoid or at least blunt such a political furor if the point was got over that the CIA agents were part of a "devils for angels" deal.

While favoring the prisoner swap to obtain the release of the CIA agents, Director McCone and his lieutenants vigorously opposed what they deemed as unnecessary and undesirable publicity relating to the agents.

The CIA officials stressed particularly that citing the agents would play squarely into Castro's hands, and also would impair the activities of the huge intelligence agency throughout the world.

The intelligence authorities made much of the fact that none of the agents had confessed,

and that Castro had no evidence to back up his charges that CIA men were among the exchanged prisoners.

BUT ONCE U. S. NEWS REPORTS attributed to "authoritative sources" were published, then Castro could use them to substantiate all the furious accusations he has been hurling at CIA, and this unquestionably would win him considerable credence in Latin America.

McCone warned that if government officials adopt a policy of acknowledging agents, that will make it difficult to recruit them because of fear of being exposed.

But the political reasoning of Sorensen, strongly seconded by Salinger, carried the day, and the President's "alter - ego" let the world know about the CIA agents.

In an unnoticed "Speranza Lecture" at Columbia University on April 18, Sorensen made the startling pronouncement that "President Kennedy's successor, regardless of party, will find it difficult to reverse the nation's present course in space or in Latin America."

WHATEVER THE MERITS of these various decisions," continued Sorensen, "it is clear that no President starts out with a clean slate before him. And even after he is in office, a President cannot easily reverse a promise made by a subordinate — by an ambassador in foreign assistance, for example, or in the recognition of a new government—if that man's stature in the host country is to continue to be respected.

"Surprisingly enough, a President's decision in either domestic or foreign affairs," related Sorensen, "may also depend upon its acceptance within the executive branch itself — on the President's ability to gain acceptance for his point of view over dissent, inertia, incompetence, or impotence among his own appointees and policy officials as well as the permanent bureaucracy."

WITHOUT GOING INTO SPECIFIC details Sorensen added: "I can recall more than one occasion when it was necessary for the President to convince his own appointees before they could undertake to convince the Congress, the Soviet or some other party.



Mr. Allen



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